Microlink™
Road Map

P|L|A|T|O®
Computer-Based Education

Microlink Road Map

Contents

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Introduction

The PLATO Microlink service is new, but many of the features have been in use on Control Data networks for many years. This booklet is your road map through the PLATO Microlink service. It identifies the locations of the PLATO features and shows you the routes and procedures for moving from one place to another. If you need information on how to access PLATO Microlink, refer to the manual Accessing PLATO Microlink.

PLATO Microlink Overview

Your starting point for all PLATO activity is the Microlink
menu:

```
Type a letter:                    PLATO Microlink
─────────────────────────────────────────────────────
a   User Information

b   Electronic Mail

c   Text Processing

d   Graphics Design

e   PLATO Programs

f   File Management

g   Reference Aids

h   Other Features
─────────────────────────────────────────────────────
i   Talk      j   Announcements   k   Calculate   l   Leave
─────────────────────────────────────────────────────
Current Time:   4:57              Connect Time:   0:07
```

From the menu, your destinations may include, for example,
The Mines of Moria, the adventure game, or a text processing
document that you have created. The section in this manual
"PLATO Microlink features" describes each option in greater
detail.

How to Access PLATO Features

When using the Microlink service, you must move from one feature to another. You can accomplish this by using two types of keypresses: menu choices and function keys.

Menus

The terms catalog, library, index, and menu often refer to a similar means of accessing the PLATO features. You are given a list of options with a number or letter associated with each (see the Microlink menu for an example). To indicate your choice, type the letter or number associated with it. Choosing an option usually changes the screen in some way. If nothing happens, you may have to press NEXT to confirm your choice. You typically make your major choices within the PLATO service from a menu.

Turning Pages

Another method of moving through the PLATO services is by using function keys. On Control Data terminals, function keys have common labels such as NEXT and BACK which indicate their functions (NEXT moves you forward and BACK moves you backward). The existing PLATO features typically use these keys. Your Personal Computer has different names for the function keys, but you should be able to translate PLATO instructions to the Personal Computer keyboard quite rapidly.

The following chart shows which Personal Computer key to press in response to each PLATO instruction.

Label	Key		Label	Key
ANS	F2		MICRO	F4
BACK	F8		NEXT	Enter ⏎
COPY	F1		STOP	F10
CR	⇧ + ⇆		SUB	F5
DATA	F9		SUPER	F6
EDIT	NUM LOCK		TAB	⇆
ERASE	←		TERM	⇧ + F2
FONT	⇧ + F4		□	F3
HELP	Scroll Lock		⇐	ESC
LAB	F7			

An Example

To better understand the methods of moving within the PLATO service, consider the example mentioned earlier. Suppose you wish to play the adventure game, The Mines of Moria.
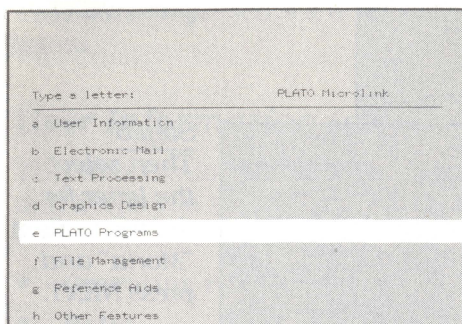
Step 1
Type "e" to access PLATO programs.
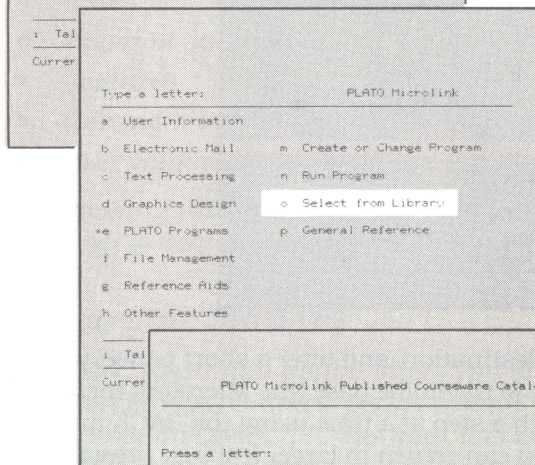
Step 2
Options m through p from the PLATO programs submenu. Type "o" for the catalog.
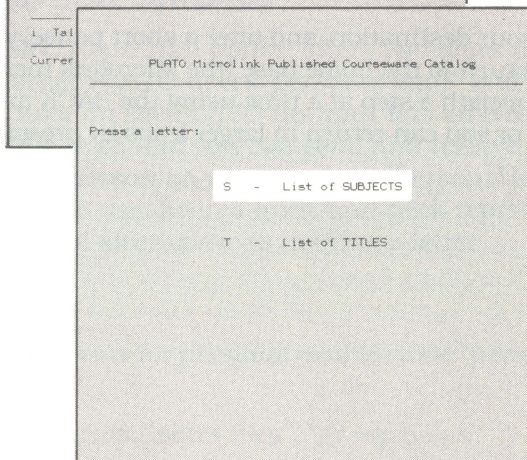
Step 3
You can type either "s" or "t"; but, assuming you do not know the exact title of the game, choose "s".

PLATO Microlink Catalog   Type a number:

LIST OF SUBJECTS

1   Advertising   12 Mathematics, elementary
2   Astrology   13 Occult sciences
3   Aviation   14 Psychology
4   Biological rhythms   15 Puzzles
5   Business   16 PLATO topics
6   Chemistry   17 Restaurants
7   Consumer credit   18 Scheduling
8   English as second language   19 Spanish language
9   Games   20 Spelling
10 Management   21 Typing
11 Mathematics

Step 4
Type the number for the menu item "Games" and press NEXT.

PLATO Microlink Catalog   Press a letter:

Games   FILENAME

a. 100 Yard Dash   0dash
b. A brief look at biorhythm theory   0bos
c. Bingo   0bingo
d. Bicycles   0bicycles
e. Checkers   0checkers
f. Concentration   0concentra
g. Darwin   0darwini
h. Deer hunt   0hunt
i. Drag strip   0drag
j. Empire   0empire
k. Fast-checkers   0fastcheck
l. Fractions basketball   0drib
m. Fun   0fun
n. Go   0playgo
o. Hang a spy   0hangspy
p. Mathreact   0mreact
q. Mazewar   0mazewar
r. Moria   0moria
s. NIM   0mlcnim
t. Ordeal of the hangman   0hangman

u   Next Page   v   Beginning of List   w   Return to Index

Step 5
Then select the letter for the menu item "Moria" and press NEXT.

You have reached your destination, and after a short pause, you begin playing. To return to the home base (the Microlink menu) you can retrace your path a step at a time using the BACK and SHIFT-BACK keys, or you can return in larger leaps by pressing SHIFT-STOP.

PLATO Microlink Features

The Mines of Moria is just one of the hundreds of programs and other utilities you can use in the PLATO Microlink service. This section presents a brief overview of the main Microlink menu.

User Information (a)

This short, informative lesson introduces the Microlink service and keeps you informed of current information. Topics in this lesson include—

- Operating rules
- Rates
- Hours of operation
- Features
- Getting help
- User courtesy

By glancing through User Information occasionally, you can keep up to date on all the PLATO Microlink services.

Electronic Mail (b)

The Electronic Mail option offers two types of communication with other PLATO users: personal mail* and general notes**. Each user on the PLATO network has an electronic mailbox for personal mail, and you can send and receive messages to and from any person on your network. Personal mail is efficient and easy to use. Even a hunt-and-peck typist finds it an economical alternative to mailing a letter.

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* Other terms for personal mail include "personal notes" and "pnotes."

** Other terms: "notes files", "group notes"

The General Notes option provides a public bulletin-board service for the exchange of ideas, opinions, and general information. General notes provides a forum to express yourself and to meet people with similar interests.

The Notes File Sequencer provides a means to read only the notes you have not previously seen. This feature, as well as other communications options, is explained in the Electronic Mail booklet.

Text Processing (c)

This text editor offers features similar to word processing and can help you organize almost any document that needs frequent editing or updating. The text processing* editor allows you to define a document, enter text, move sections of text, and edit the text. See the booklet, Text Processing, for further details.

Graphics Design (d)

The PLATO graphics editor** is a tool for creating elaborate graphics and textual displays that include lines, boxes, circles, arcs, and much more. You can design your own text characters or borrow special characters from a large library. Your booklet, Graphics Design, can get you started in creating and displaying graphics and incorporating them into programs.

PLATO Programs (e)

The PLATO Microlink service contains a library of educational courses and lessons ranging in complexity from the preschool to the college level. This courseware has been selected from the largest collection of computer-based education programs in the world. The library also comprises many topics of general interest apart from formal education. Treat yourself to a stimulating computer-based game, competing with yourself or with other users.

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 * Text processing is also called "Documentor."
 ** Graphics design is also called "GUIDE."

To browse through the library, sign on to the service and select item e, PLATO Programs. You can explore the library and try any program of interest; if you enter a program that does not meet your needs, just press SHIFT-STOP to return to the menu. Programs and lessons are continually added to the library, so browse often and watch for new additions.

Writing Programs

You can write your own programs using the PLATO Microlink service using PLATO Author Language, a language designed especially for computer-based education. To create and edit a program, use the PLATO programs option on the main menu.

Reference aids and support available to the programmer make writing programs on the PLATO Microlink service easy. By using the Reference Aids option, you can review an interactive, on-line user's guide for PLATO Author Language.

In addition, advice is available through "Help Notes" and on-line consulting with Control Data personnel. Other programmers are also good sources for advice on the best way to solve a programming problem.

Additional information on writing and publishing programs with PLATO Microlink service is presented on line. Watch for this information in Announcements and User Information.

File Management (f)

Some of the options of the Microlink service—such as text processing, graphics design, writing programs, and owning notes files—require the use of information storage. The File Management option lets you create, delete, and otherwise manipulate files. Since you are charged for the file space you use, it is to your advantage to delete unneeded files and to keep stored files as small as possible.

Reference Aids (g)

The PLATO service has an elaborate system of help sequences and other aids. On the Microlink menu, you can choose among three help lessons: text processing reference*, graphics design reference**, and general reference*** (for programming). These aids provide you with detailed explanations. In addition, most lessons and utilities have help sequences built in—whenever you have a question, try pressing HELP (Scroll Lock on the Personal Computer keyboard) for explanations and information.

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* Also called "dintro."

** Also called "guideaids."

*** Also called "aids."

Talk (i)

The talk* option allows you to communicate with someone else on the system without interrupting your current display. The bottom two lines of your display are used to show a running conversation with another user. One line contains your messages; the other line shows the messages you are receiving.

Calculator (k)

This utility turns your Personal Computer terminal into a multifunction calculator. It calculates the four basic functions (+, –, x, and ÷) as well as scientific functions. Press HELP while using the calculator for more information.

Leave (l)

This option signs you off the PLATO Microlink service and returns you to the double slashes. At this point, you are no longer being charged for access.

Announcements (j)

The current announcement appears on the bottom of your screen when you first sign on. If you wish to read the announcement later, return to the Microlink menu and choose the Announcement option.

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* Also called "TERM-talk" (abbreviation of "terminal talk").